

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, December 17. 1692. Licens'd, E. B.



Quest. 1. **W**ether a Child be in Duty bound to be of the same Religion with the Parent, till he's by sound Arguments convinc'd of the falsehood of the same?

Answ. A mutable Temper is so great a Disgrace to any Man, that none ought to change any Opinion they have once embrac'd, without seeing good reason for't: And if Persons wou'd argue fairly of another Religion, they ought first to understand their own: Now if this holds in general, much more we think it does so, where there's the Reverence of a Parent superadded to the obligations of Reason.

Quest. 2. Whether 'tis lawful to read Romances?

Answ. Every one grants that 'tis lawful to read *Quintus Curtius*, or *Xenophon's Life of Cyrus*, in both of which the Loves as well as Wars of two great Monarchs are describ'd: — And if so, we think 'tis not easie to assign a reason why the same Stories mayn't be read, when the *Heroes* are made greater, and their *Actions* more compleat and lively than before, as in a good Romance they generally are, and particularly in the *Grand Cyrus*, and *Cassandra*: Tho' we think then that the Reading these Books may be *lawful*; and have some *Convenience* too, as to forming the *Minds* of *Persons of Quality*; yet we think 'em not at all *convenient* for the *Vulgar*, because they give 'em extravagant Idea's of *practice*, and before they have *Judgment* to byals their *Fancies*, generally make 'em think themselves some King or Queen, or other: — one *Fool* must be *Mazares*, t'other *Artamen*; and so for the Women, no less than *Queens* or *Emperors* will serve 'em, the Inconveniences of which are afterwards oftentimes sooner observ'd than remedy'd. Add to this, the softning the *Mind* by *Love*, which are the greatest Subject of these sort of Books, and the fooling away so many *hours*, and *days*, and *years*, which might be much better employ'd, and which must be repented of: And upon the whole, we think *Young People* wou'd do better, either not to read 'em at all, or to use 'em more sparingly than they generally do, when once they set about 'em.

The four following Questions we receiv'd from a Gentleman at a great distance from the Town, who is pleas'd to assume the borrow'd Name of *Philalethes*.

Quest. 3. Where was the Land of Nod?

Answ. See our former Indexes, and you'll find this once or twice answer'd.

Quest. 4. Who there were that helpt Cain to build the City Enoch? and whom did he Build it for, seeing we read of no more persons then in the World but Adam and Eve, Cain and his Wife, and his Son Enoch, immediately after the Birth of whom the Building of this City is recorded?

Answ. This has been also largely reply'd to in some of our first Papers. — All we shall lay tot at present is, that the whole seeming force of the difficulty lie's here, in what they call a *Negative Argument*, which indeed can conclude nothing: — 'Tis strange, it may be said, that no more persons were recorded by *Name*, or at least in gross, if there were at that time so many in the World as to People Countries, and build Cities. But it easily appears to one who consults the manner of Writing used by the Sacred Authors, that this is nothing strange at all; for they only give a summary account of things, *Mores* especially, who in a few Chapters was to deliver the History and Chronology of several thousand years — but this he cou'd not have done in that compass, had he inserted the Names of *all Living*, nay must have presented us with a *Muster-toll* instead of a *History*, without which he accomplishes what he aims at, to give us (by the *Theorists* leave) a *true account* of the *Genesis* of the World, and the *line of Man* from *Adam* to *Noah*, and so down to his own *Time* and *History*.

Quest. 5. How these following Precepts of Christianity are reconcileable with right Reason: viz. Mat. 5. 44. Love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you. Mark 11. 25. Forgive, if ye have ought against any. Rom. 12. 10. Be kindly affectionate one to another, — 17. Recompence to no man evil for evil. 19. — Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves; and such like. If these, and the like Scriptures be taken in their utmost extent and Latitude, and as they may be improv'd by a *Logical Head*, without any limitation or restriction, do they not utterly forbid all *Resistance*, and *Self-defence*, all going to *Law* for *Defence*, and *recovery of Right*; all *Infliction* of punishment upon *Offenders*, all going to *War* upon any account whatsoever; and if so, what then wou'd become of the *World* in a short time? Wou'd not the *whole Face* of it be soon overspread with *Violence*, the *wicked*, *strong*, *rapacious* and *covetous*, invade the better part of *Mankind*, and deprive 'em of their *Riches*, *Properties* and *Lives*?

If you say the *lawfulness* of *Self-defence*, of *inflicting punishment* on *Malefactors*, of going to *Law*, and making *War* may be evinc'd from other *Scriptures*, and from *Reason*, pray reconcile the *Scriptures* above quoted, with those *Scriptures* and *Reason*?

Answ. For the first Difficulty, — *Love your Enemies*; that its agreeable to right Reason, appears not only from some Precepts, even in the Old Law, of obliging and assisting our Enemy, and from many more in the Prophets, but even from right Reason, which the Heathens themselves were not ignorant of, as we doubt not but the Querist very well knows in the Instances of *Epicetus*, *Plutarch*, *Seneca*, *Maximus*, *Tyrius*, and others, as has been abundantly prov'd by the most Learned *Grotius* on this Subject: Tho' the same Reason and *Scripture* too will tell us, we are to make a difference in the degrees of our *Love* to *Friends* and *Enemies*; the latter of which, tho' we are bid, *Love*, we are no where commanded to trust or believe 'em. For the second place — *Forgive, if you have ought against any*. Dr. *Hammond* thus paraphrases it: "Put all malice from "you, and be filled with all *Charity*, even to your *Enemies*. In the next, *Be kindly affectionate one to another*, there's no difficulty, it coming short of forgiving one another. For the next, *Recompence to no man evil for evil*, there's more of difficulty in't: But we'll for once chuse to explain this by a yet harder Text, that in *Mat. 5. 39. Resist not Evil*; concerning which Dr. *Hammond* has a particular Dissertation, p. 53. of his *Paraphrase*, for after having thus given the meaning on't in short, his way is, "That you oppose not *Violence* to the "injurious Man; but on the contrary, whosoever shall "use thee contumeliously, bear it patiently, as to turn "the Cheek signified Proverbially, yea tho' this were "likely to bring the same upon thee another time; in "matters of this *light Nature*, venture that rather, than "think of opposing *Violence* to it. After this, in his Note on the word *αντίστασθαι*, here used, he says its much of the same Sence with the phrase in the *Romans*, *νανον αντί γενες αποδιδόντες*, Repaying evil for evil, or avenging themselves. "We are here, he says, forbid to use *Violence* against any, by which Precept as set in opposition to the *Lex Talionis* of the *Jews*, he adds, 'twill appear that in Cases of that Nature, a *Light contumely*, Sec. Not only *private Revenge* is Interdicted Christianity, but also exacting *legal Revenge* before the Magistrate. Now to take thele, or the like *Scriptures* without any restriction or limitation, is not the part of a *Logical*, but a *Sophistical Head*, or at least of one that thinks at all *Adventures*. For the reconciling the *Scriptures* above quoted, with *Self-defence*, *lawful War*, and other *Scriptures*, we think there's no great difficulty. In most, if not all the Cases mention'd, a Christian is consider'd as a *private person*, such as all our Saviours Followers were

to be, while that of the Father was true of 'em — *Cædantur non cædebant* — whereas inflicting Punishment on Malefactors, and making Lawful War, are *Publick Acts*, and that *Acts of Charity* too to the rest of the World. For not going to Law, the difficulty vanishes if we take Dr. *Hammond*'s fence of the words, — “ That in Case of “ any *inconsiderable Injury* done us, as taking a *Shirt*, or “ *Joine such Garment* from us by a *Suit of Law*, (which “ *he calls Civil Violence*) we should not meditate Re-“ *venge*, or *fly to Force*, tho' by that Pacific means we “ incur the danger of a greater Loss.

Quest. 6. *How may the Practice of the generality, nay, I think all Christians, be reconciled to these Precepts?* If *wounding* or *killing our Neighbour*, or *destroying his Country*, be *an Argument of our loving him?* or if *they concern only private Men and not Societies, are not Societies and Magistrates as much oblig'd by the Laws of Christian Religion as any other?*

Answ. 'Tis much easier to reconcile the *Dictates of the Holy Spirit* with each other, and with right Reason, than the *Practices* of those who are call'd Christians with either — We wish we cou'd do it, but must despair on't — The Event shows that even Almighty Power and Wisdom either will not or cannot do this, without putting a Violence on the Nature of Man, and destroying the most to make a few happy: Tho' neither we think are these Precepts violated by a necessary *Lawful War*, not prosecuted to *Barbarous Extremities*, the Magistrate being intrusted by God with the Lives and Estates of the Subjects, for *Preservation* whereof Government was *first Instituted*, nor surely did Christ come to *turn the World upside down*, in that fence in which his Apostles were accus'd for doing it.

Thus we have endeavour'd to satisfie the Gentleman's *Objections* — *Scraples* we can't call 'em, for we doubt not but he's sufficiently clear in these Matters in his own mind and better Judgment — If he pleases to Object any thing against our *Reply*, we'll endeavour to Answer it.

Quest. 7. *Was there ever such a Man as Moses? if there was, which of the Ancient Greeks and Heathens mention him?*

Answ. *Numenius Apamenis* a Pythagorian Philosopher, Cited by *Aristobulus* in a Book dedicated to *Ptolemy*: *Philometer* the Philosopher, delivers, that *Jannes* and *Jambres* came not far behind the great *Moses* in the matter of the Plagues. The Arabian Geographer, *Geograph. Nubiens*. p. 4. *Climat. 2.* p. 5. *Climat. 3.* mentions these Magi as Contended with *Moses*; and *Agaibarchides* of *Cnidus*, who wrote the History of *Alexander's Successors*, objects *Ptolemy's* inglorious taking *Jerusalem* upon the Sabbath-day, he condemning the Jews for suffering themselves to be made Vassals, rather than defend themselves on that day, which was one of *Moses's Commands* in the Law. *Orpheus*, and many more mention him; but some will Object, there is nothing remaining of the true *Orpheus*, if he is brought against their Opinion. *Apion* sayes he was a Heathen Priest, and *Philo* in *Vita Moysi*, that he was a Law-giver. 'Tis evident as History can make it, that there was such a Man as *Cyrus*, King of *Perisia*, whose Life *Zenophon* wrote, *Diodorus* and the *Apocrypha* mention; this *Cyrus* Publisht his Decree for the Jews to rebuild their Temple to Worship at *Jerusalem*; it follows then that they had a Temple before *Cyrus's* time, and a Worship which was no other than the Law of *Moses* their Law-giver. To such as Object that this only proves that there was one call'd *Moses*, which was suppos'd to be this Person; we Answer, That since all History that mentions him, grants it, and none denies it, it wou'd be hard for the Objector to assign the time when such a *signal Deliverance* was first impos'd upon the Credulous part of Mankind, for 'tis this that will lye at their door to prove. That there was such a Man, the *Egyptians*, *Arabians*, *Perians*, &c. have recorded, from whom the *Greeks* had their hints: Was so well known, that *Porphyrie* and *Celsus*, the two learnedst and subtilest *Adversaries* that ever Christianity had, never made themselves so ridiculous against all History as to deny *Moses*. We shall only add one other Moral Argument,

to wit, That if the whole *History of the Law* and *Moses* had not been a certain truth, the *Jews* themselves wou'd have disown'd it, since his Precepts and Injunctions were so very severe, the Laws that he gave 'em punishing very small Crimes with Death, continually upbraiding 'em with their Disobedience, the scandalous Crimes of their Fore-fathers, &c. which they cou'd never have born and submitted to, were they Men of the same Passions and Affections as the rest of the World, which we need not go far to be perswaded of.

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